United Nations A/72/122

General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 July 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Items 100 (n) and (p) of the preliminary list*

General and complete disarmament: assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to requests by the General Assembly to the Secretary-General contained in resolution 71/48 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and resolution 71/52 on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them.

The report highlights the major achievements of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held in New York from 6 to 10 June 2016, and of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. It also includes a summary of the activities of the following mechanisms: the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation and the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms Mechanism. Recent efforts in the application of the International Small Arms Control Standards by States and other entities are also referenced in the report.

* A/72/50.

17-11368 (E) 130717

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/48 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. In its resolution 71/52 on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General and those States and organizations that were in a position to do so to continue to provide assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to consider the matter and to report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session on the implementation of the resolution.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to the requests made by the General Assembly in the resolutions mentioned above. To enable a coherent approach to those overlapping and interconnected issues, resolutions 71/48 and 71/52 are addressed together.

II. Activities carried out by the United Nations to implement resolutions 71/48 and 71/52

A. Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

4. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons are universal frameworks to address the scourge of illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. Their implementation continues to be a priority for the international community.

5. The Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was held from 6 to 10 June 2016 in New York, under the chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations, Courtenay Rattray.

6. The Sixth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms considered a range of topics relevant to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument, notably the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; marking, record-keeping and tracing; the implications of recent developments in small arms and light weapons technology; the role of regional and subregional organizations; international cooperation and assistance; capacity-building; the transfer of technology and equipment; and the sustainability and effectiveness of financial and technical assistance. Member States considered a report by the Secretary-General (A/71/438-A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/1), which, inter alia, covered the following topics: the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the general implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms; an update on developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design and their implications for the full and effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument; and financial and technical assistance.

7. The Sixth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms concluded successfully with the adoption by consensus of a substantive outcome document

(A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/2). The acknowledgment of the link among the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in particular Goal 16.4, which relates to the reduction of illicit arms flows), the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument was one of the most significant achievements of the Meeting. States underlined that achieving Goal 16.4 would have positive effects on other development goals, such as poverty reduction, economic growth, health, gender equality and safe cities and communities. In the outcome document, States called for strengthened measurability of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument, and encouraged States to take advantage of the existing reporting mechanism under both instruments to support the collection of data for relevant indicators relating to the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. The Sixth Biennial Meeting also addressed new themes, such as the issue of the illicit reactivation of deactivated weapons and the challenges posed by the illicit online trade in small arms and light weapons.

9. Progress was made on gender-related issues in the outcome document, which included a call for States to take into account the different impacts of illicit small arms and light weapons on women, men, girls and boys, the promotion of meaningful participation of women in related policymaking, planning and implementation, the encouragement of sex-disaggregated data collection and a plea for increased funding of gender-sensitive programmes.

10. As at previous meetings, States held divergent views on the interpretation of the scope of the Programme of Action on Small Arms. Some continued to interpret the instrument as including ammunition, while others maintained otherwise. In a departure from previous practice, States included those opposing interpretations in the outcome document.

11. In preparation for the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects,[1] Member States tasked the Secretariat to examine implementation trends, challenges and opportunities relating to the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument. They also requested the Secretariat to provide the Third Small Arms Review Conference with an update of the comprehensive study on the adequacy, effectiveness and sustainability of financial and technical assistance, and to submit an updated report on options for the enhanced funding of activities relating to the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument and for the establishment of programmes for the training of relevant officials. Furthermore, Member States undertook to consider the following issues at the Third Small Arms Review Conference: implications for the International Tracing Instrument of recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design; and ways to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument through the provision of training, equipment and the transfer of technology, as well as ways to ensure the adequacy, effectiveness and sustainability of assistance for the implementation of both instruments, including financial and technical assistance.

[1] The Third Small Arms Review Conference will be held from 18 to 29 June 2018, in New York, and will be preceded by a preparatory committee meeting, which will be held from 19 to 23 March 2018.

B. United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms Mechanism

12. The United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms Mechanism[2] has continued to galvanize the inputs of 23 United Nations partners in addressing the issue of small arms in pursuit of the objective of "Delivering as one" in the field of practical disarmament.

13. During the reporting period, the Mechanism continued to function as a vehicle to discuss and jointly develop key United Nations system-wide policies, namely, the development of indicators for target 16.4[3] of the Sustainable Development Goals (from an arms control perspective), the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices for the General Assembly (A/71/187) and the biennial report on small arms for the Security Council for 2017. In addition, relevant disarmament and arms control topics addressed by the Human Rights Council in 2016 were a focus of continuous and close discussions within the Mechanism (see, for example, A/HRC/RES/32/12).

C. Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures

14. During the reporting period, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/64, in which it encouraged the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures to contribute to the development of voluntary indicators at the national level, which could be used to measure progress made in the implementation of target 16.4.

15. The Group of Interested States continued its efforts to include practical disarmament measures in United Nations-mandated peacekeeping missions. In this regard, the Group supported the provision of training for effective weapons management in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations. A project jointly implemented by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs was presented at a meeting of the Group. The project was aimed at producing guidelines on the disarmament component of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives for use in peacekeeping operations.

16. With regard to the promotion of field-oriented perspectives, the Group of Interested States highlighted regional efforts to reduce arms flows, particularly in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

D. International Small Arms Control Standards

17. The International Small Arms Control Standards provide practical guidance on ways to put in place effective national controls over the full life cycle of small arms and light weapons, in order to reduce the risk of their falling into the hands of criminals, terrorists or others who would misuse them.

18. The International Small Arms Control Standards contribute directly to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically target 16.1 to "significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere" and target 16.4 to "significantly reduce illicit ... arms flows". Building national capacities for combatting illicit arms trafficking is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (see A/70/794, para. 46), and States are encouraged to use the

[2] www.poa-iss.org/CASA/CASA.aspx.

[3] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16.

Standards to support peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts and to conduct national self-assessments of the effectiveness of existing small arms and light weapons controls (see A/71/438-A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/1, recommendation 8).

19. Advocacy by regional organizations, in particular the European Union, the African Union and the Caribbean Community, has resulted in the International Small Arms Control Standards being used in more than 100 countries. In addition, recent innovative uses of the Standards, for example to assess the safety and security of a floating armoury in the Gulf of Oman, have demonstrated their versatility.

20. In the course of 2016, Governments, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations used the International Small Arms Control Standards extensively in trainings designed to build national capacity on small arms and light weapons control. Germany used the Standards to train physical security and stockpile management specialists from 11 participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States trained security officials from Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda on Standards-based stockpile management. The Pacific Small Arms Action Group trained 30 security officials from Fiji on the Standards. Trainings conducted by the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as a training conducted by the Bonn International Centre for Conversion in Mali, introduced the Standards guidance on physical security and stockpile management.

21. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa used the International Small Arms Control Standards to help to build the physical and security stockpile management capacity of six countries in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria). The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean used the Standards to help to prevent the diversion of small arms from private security companies in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Peru. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific used them to help to strengthen small arms control in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. Austria used the Standards to transfer specialized knowledge to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kenya, the Republic of Moldova and Senegal, and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research used the Standards in its support for the Federal Government of Somalia.

22. The International Small Arms Control Standards have made important contributions to the harmonization of United Nations programmes on small arms and light weapons control and constitute a good example of how the humanitarian, peace and security and development pillars of the United Nations can work together in partnership to help States to prevent conflict.[4] They provide comprehensive guidance on the acquisition, possession and use of firearms by civilians (see A/HRC/32/21). The Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017 (S/2016/255, annex) used the Standards to ensure a harmonized approach to small arms and light weapons control in five countries in the region (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania).

[4] See United Nations Development Programme, "Strengthening the rule of law in crisis-affected and fragile situations" (New York, 2016).

23. The International Small Arms Control Standards Inter Agency Support Unit trained government and United Nations Development Programme officials from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, as well as officials from Togo and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, to use the International Small Arms Control Standards Assessment Tool to compare existing national controls on small arms and light weapons with international standards in order to identify and prioritize areas that may be in need of strengthening.

E. United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

24. Since its inception in 2013, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation[5] has funded 39 projects all over the world, for a total budget of approximately $6 million.[6] During the reporting period, 11 projects were funded, for a total budget of $1.7 million.

25. Project activities included capacity-building, contributions to ongoing multilateral and national processes, implementation tools and guides, action-oriented research, information platforms, databases and e-learning. Thematic issues that were addressed included legislation, end use and end user control, national points of contact, reporting, weapons destruction, stockpile management, border control, gender issues and children, public awareness and South-South cooperation.

26. The activities outlined above illustrate the sustained efforts undertaken by the international community to lessen the effects of the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, which continue to be the weapons of choice in armed conflict and crime. A lot still remains to be done. The level of international assistance and cooperation should be increased to match the demand for action in countering the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The Third Review Conference will thus present an important opportunity in 2018 for States to demonstrate that the Programme of Action on Small Arms and its International Tracing Instrument continue to be dynamic and living arms control measures for the promotion of international peace and security. The Third Review Conference will have to be forward-looking, building on the encouraging successes of the Biennial Meeting of States of June 2016.

---

[5] See www.un.org/disarmament/unscar/.

[6] A detailed list of all projects is available from www.un.org/disarmement/unscar.